

Reforms and Results

A chronological collection of excerpts from articles throughout Wisconsin showing how 2011 Wisconsin Act 10 has improved education and government services to the benefit of public workers and taxpayers.

“We must take immediate action to ensure fiscal stability in our state.”

**Governor Scott Walker
February 10, 2011**

Overview

This collection of articles proves without a doubt that Governor Walker's reforms are working.

Education is improving by ridding schools of last in first out seniority rules that are contrary to keeping the best and brightest teachers in the classroom. Without collective bargaining, school boards and leaders can now make decisions based on what is best for students first, not the adults. As well, thousands of teaching positions have been saved throughout Wisconsin because of the savings related to Act 10.

Government services are also improving at a lower cost to taxpayers than in the past. Local governments can now share and contract for services to reduce costs. Overtime abuse can now be curtailed that arbitrarily inflated government costs to the harm of local taxpayers.

Competition has now been introduced in Wisconsin's government sector health insurance markets. As these articles show, this is allowing numerous schools and other local governments to balance their budgets without tax increases and in many cases without compensation changes to public employees.

Property taxes have been held flat. School and other local government levies were held in check without a reduction in service because of Governor Walker's reforms. The school levy statewide dropped for the first time in six years. The overall property tax burden was held to the lowest change in 15 years. The median value homeowner's property tax bill dropped for the first time in 12 years.

Editorial Boards

[Wisconsin State Journal](#). (Mar. 29, 2011) Editorial: **What cuts? Madison schools OK**

Alarmists in Madison suggest Gov. Scott Walker's state budget proposal will decimate public education.

*But Superintendent Dan Nerad's proposed 2011-2012 budget for Madison School District **tells a different story.***

Under Nerad's plan, unveiled late last week, the Madison district would:

- Launch a **new 4-year-old kindergarten program** in the fall.
- Open a charter middle school on the South Side focusing on urban agriculture.
- **Avoid any teacher layoffs.**
- Continue to offer **free health insurance** to employees who select the less-expensive plan.
- Give teachers small raises based on years of experience and advanced degrees.
- Maintain overall spending.

[Appleton Post Crescent](#). (July 5, 2011) Editorial: The good, bad about AASD health insurance

*There's one thing that's indisputable about the Appleton Area School District being able to **save \$3 million on its health insurance plan:***

*It wouldn't have happened without the cut in state aid pushed by **Gov. Scott Walker** and approved by the Legislature as part of the budget bill.*

There's another thing that's plausible about the health insurance plan:

It probably wouldn't have happened without the looming elimination of teachers' collective bargaining powers.

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#). (August 10, 2011) Editorial: **Sky isn't falling**

*So it turns out that the sky isn't going to fall on all local governments in Wisconsin. The numbers now starting to come in show that **Gov. Scott Walker's "tools"** for local governments apparently will help at least some of them deal with cuts in state aid imposed by the state budget.*

*That's contrary to the expectation and the rhetoric of critics in the spring, and it's to Walker's credit. **It bears out the governor's assessment of his budget-repair bill,** although we still maintain he could have reached his goals without dealing a body blow to public employee unions.*

[Manitowoc Herald Times Reporter](#). (October 31, 2011) *Editorial: Tax situation could be worse*

This all could have turned out worse in the politically charged environment in which budget negotiators had to do their jobs this time around. There was a lot thrown at them in a short time, involving concrete changes and new philosophies. They adapted remarkably well and are keeping the bottom line manageable for taxpayers.

The difficulty will be to sustain that in the long run, given the same rules. But that's a different problem, for a different day.

For now, enjoy the relative calm of the property tax waters.

[Wisconsin State Journal](#). (December 6, 2011) *Editorial: Sky isn't falling on public schools*

*Here in Madison, the School Board **avoided teacher layoffs**, launched a 4-year-old kindergarten program, opened a new middle school and gave teachers raises based on years of experience.*

Yet teachers in Madison still took a hit in take-home pay because they are now contributing to their pensions.

*That financial burden shouldn't be ignored or minimized. Yet many private sector workers have fared a lot worse in this challenging economy. **And thanks to Walker's budget, homeowners are finally getting some property tax relief.***

*As for next school year, Madison is "**well-positioned for the future**," according to its assistant superintendent for business services. That's because the local School Board can still require its employees to contribute to the cost of their health insurance, and the district has some unused taxing authority.*

The WASDA survey didn't specifically explore how many districts across the state have similar flexibility for next year. But the survey did find that a net 3,368 education positions — nearly half of them teachers — have been shed across the state this year.

*That's a lot more than in recent years, which is disturbing. **But there's more to the story: If you remove a few of the big school districts, such as Milwaukee, that didn't or couldn't require their employees to contribute more to pensions and health insurance — meaning they didn't use the "tools" Walker gave them to absorb state aid cuts — staff reductions are relatively small.***

Chronological Collection of Articles

[Wisconsin State Journal](#). (Mar. 26, 2011) Madison school budget has smaller property tax levy

*"This is certainly **positive from the perspective of property taxpayers**, however it is incorrect to assume that this tax decrease is a result of our budget reductions," Nerad said in a statement.*

"The property tax decrease is being imposed on us by the state through the governor's budget proposal."

*The **biggest factor in closing the remaining gap is requiring employees to pay half of their annual pension contribution**, saving the district \$11.5 million.*

The agreement allowed the district to require employees to pay up to 5 percent of their health insurance premium next year, but Nerad is proposing other cuts to avoid that option. Other districts are requiring employees to pay up to 12 percent of their premium, which Walker is requiring of state employees.

*"One of our budget goals was to **delay for at least one year any increase in employee contributions for health insurance premiums**," Nerad said.*

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[Wausau Daily Herald](#). (Apr. 12, 2011) Wausau School Board cuts \$1.4 million from budget

*The bulk of the cuts -- \$780,000 -- comes from the savings administrators expect from replacing 26 retiring teachers with less-experienced ones at a lower salary range. Another \$450,000 will be cut by reducing the number of high school teaching positions by nine to match declining enrollment and \$100,000 is expected to be saved by eliminating two elementary teaching positions. **Leaders expect the decrease will be made by attrition, with no layoffs**.*

[Appleton Post Crescent](#). (Apr. 26, 2011) Kimberly Area School District approves teachers' contract concessions

*Teachers agreed to a change in health insurance carriers that is expected to save \$821,000 in the 2011-12 school year. Teachers will also pay half of their pension contributions, which lends **\$1.3 million in savings to the district.***

[MacIver Institute](#). (Apr. 27, 2011) Benefit reform could save school districts hundreds of millions

"Health plan costs for the region's teachers are 63 percent higher, on average, than the plans offered at private-sector companies with some union representation, and 80 percent higher than the average single-coverage cost for all private-sector plans," according to the study.

*The study also found that Milwaukee Public Schools could **save \$221 million** a year by bringing teacher benefit plans more in line with the public sector. Even if the district were to merely enroll its teachers into the state health plan, it would save \$64 million annually.*

[Baraboo News Republic](#). (May 2, 2011) Schools go with Dean: Board opts to change insurance provider

*The Baraboo School Board expects to save about **\$660,000** next year after deciding to change insurance providers Monday evening.*

After opening the bids, he said the monthly family premium proposed by WEA Trust was about \$1,630, while Dean's bid called for a monthly family premium of just under \$1,400.

The total annual cost to the district was nearly \$5 million for WEA Trust's insurance and just under \$4.3 million for Dean.

[Green Bay Press Gazette](#). (May 8, 2011) Wisconsin schools feel pinch of proposed state budget

"If Governor Walker didn't exist, the school districts in the state of Wisconsin are still on the road toward fiscal bankruptcy," said Tom Beebe, executive director of the Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools, a coalition of about 150 school districts, teachers unions and parent and student groups. "It has nothing to do with the governor's budget. The cuts they're making are based on the system they have."

*Evers maintains that a more equitable funding stream over the last two decades could have resulted in less drastic increases in education spending. **Rossmiller believes the removal of collective bargaining will help school districts find efficiencies previously blocked by teacher contracts.***

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (May 24, 2011) [After Hartland teachers agree, union blocks insurance switch](#)

Hartland - Teachers in the Hartland-Lakeside School District have agreed to switch health insurance providers to **save the district \$690,000**, but the executive committee of a union that represents Arrowhead High feeder schools is blocking the change, officials say.

Faced with a \$1.2 million reduction in state aid for the 2011-12 school year, the School Board has been looking at ways to reduce costs and avoid program cuts and increases in class sizes, Superintendent Glenn W. Schilling said Tuesday.

But switching from WEA Trust to United Healthcare **will give the district enough saving coupled with \$250,000 in saving from Walker's pension contribution provision the maintain the district's current level of programs and services**, Henningsen said.

Other districts have switched from WEA Trust insurance to achieve savings, the Menomonee Falls district among the latest.

The Falls School Board on Monday approved a new contract with teachers that achieved a saving **of \$2.4 million** by switching health insurance from WEA Trust to Humana.

[Sheboygan Press](#). (June 1, 2011) Sheboygan County budget for 2012 looks better

Earlier this year, Sheboygan County officials lamented they were looking at a projected budget gap of more than \$4 million for 2012.

But thanks to concessions made by unionized employees in the heat of the budget repair battle being fought in Madison this spring, that projected deficit has shrunk to a much more manageable \$900,000 out of the county's \$131 million budget, according to preliminary estimates presented to a trio of County Board committees in recent days.

But since then, employee concessions to pay more toward their **pensions and health insurance premiums will net the county savings of about \$800,000 this year and more than \$1.7 million in 2012 and additional savings in 2013** when other union contracts are renegotiated.

Another factor for the lower projected deficit is that health insurance costs were expected to rise nearly 10 percent in 2012. That projection has now been lowered to a five percent increase, saving the county an estimated \$500,000, Payne told the Executive Committee on Tuesday.

[The Capital Times](#). (June 8, 2011) Public hearing Wednesday on MATC budget

To plug that \$10.3 million deficit, the college found **\$6.4 million in savings from employee contract adjustments**, which forces most workers to take cuts in take-home pay because they are contributing more for health and retirement benefits. Another \$2.3 million will be saved by not filling 23 open positions, a figure that includes 10 full-time teaching lines and six vacant administrative posts. The school plans to save another **\$800,000 by having various corners of the college commit to reducing overtime** and

finding ways to run more efficiently, and another \$750,000 came from revenue adjustments.

Wauwatosa Now (June 15, 2011) [Employee concessions allow less spending without major cuts](#)

Wauwatosa residents will pay about the same in school taxes as they did last year without any major decreases in staffing or programs under a budget proposed to the Wauwatosa School Board on Monday.

*Overall, the district will spend nearly \$8 million less than it did in 2010-11, with much of that **savings coming from salary freezes for all employees, who also will participate in a new high-deductible health care plan and contribute more toward their retirements.***

[Wisconsin Rapids Tribune.](#) (June 15, 2011) Pittsville Schools OK preliminary budget

*Pittsville School District residents could see a **nearly 9 percent decrease in the school portion of their property tax bills next year.***

Property owners would pay a school tax rate of \$10.17 for each \$1,000 of equalized value - a \$1 decrease from \$11.17 for the current year, according to the district's preliminary 2011-12 budget, which the School Board approved Monday.

If approved at the district's annual meeting in October, the proposed change would amount to a decrease of \$100 for a resident with property that has an equalized value of \$100,000.

[Janesville Gazette.](#) (June 18, 2011) Scaling back cuts still an option for Whitewater

*WHITEWATER — Whitewater school officials say it's too early to gauge whether **\$410,000 saved by changing health insurance** will allow the district to reconsider cuts in next year's budget.*

*The cost of the district's new health insurance agreement is 12 percent less than last year's plan, **providing more savings than expected** when the school board nearly a month ago approved cuts in its 2011-12 budget.*

[Stevens Point Journal.](#) (June 21, 2011) Central Wisconsin schools discuss budget concerns

Another area districts have been turning to for savings have been insurance plans. Several districts recently have renegotiated their plans, officials said, and have been able to realize savings without changing coverage.

The Wisconsin Rapids School District moved to a high-deductible plan -- to \$2,000 for a single plan or \$4,000 for a family -- but there will not be any rate increases this year, School Board member John Krings said.

"It's pretty safe to say we're going to save some money," Krings said. "(District officials) don't foresee any mass layoffs."

[Wisconsin State Journal](#). (June 21, 2011) Madison School Board approves preliminary budget

*Based on an average Madison home value, that would mean a \$2,627 property tax bill, **a \$40 decrease from last year's average tax bill.***

Overall the \$362 million budget reduces spending by about \$17 million from this year's \$379 million budget.

The state budget requires districts to cut their total revenues - a combination of state aid and property taxes - by 5.5 percent. In past years districts have been able to increase revenues by 2 to 3 percent, a swing resulting in a \$24.5 million cut that Madison had to absorb.

The largest savings was created by employees agreeing to pay half of their state pension contribution, resulting in an average take-home pay cut of about \$2,750.

Although district officials negotiated the ability to have employees pay more for their health insurance premiums, the budget does not exercise that option next year.

[Appleton Post Crescent](#). (June 22, 2011) Appleton schools retains WEA Trust for insurance

*The result is **\$3.1 million in savings over current health insurance costs**, she said. The district will pay an estimated \$26.8 million for health insurance in 2011-12. Discussions at the state level over **collective bargaining and budgeting issues have been beneficial to school districts from the rate perspective**, Burns said.*

***"It forced a lot of competition.** I do think the landscape in the school marketplace has changed significantly over the last year," she said. "That's put significant pressure on WEA Trust. Previously to this year, they didn't have a lot of competition. Historically, it's very difficult for other carriers to match them."*

Don Hietpas, chief financial officer for the district, said the \$3.1 million in savings for next school year is just in health insurance premium costs.

*Early estimates show the school district also will **recover more than \$7 million by having its employees pay their share toward their pensions**, plus an increased share of their health care premiums, as the state now requires.*

"The change in the environment certainly helped us negotiate a lower rate," Hietpas said. "The Trust has been a real good partner for us. This move for them to reduce their premiums is very helpful."

[Janesville Gazette.](#) (June 22, 2011) Blackhawk Tech finalizes 2011-12 budget

Renea Ranguette, vice president of finance and college operations, said the school made up for the lost money by increasing the amount employees will pay for benefits, trimming operating costs and restructuring positions to leave several vacant.

*Full-time faculty and administrators will receive a **2 percent pay raise next year, but they also will begin contributing 5.8 percent to their retirement starting in July and 12 percent toward their health insurance starting next year.** Ranguette said.*

***Nobody was laid off for next year and no significant cuts were made to programs,** she said.*

[Appleton Post Crescent.](#) (June 29, 2011) Kaukauna Area School District projects \$1.5 million surplus after contract changes to health care, retirement savings

*KAUKAUNA — As changes to collective bargaining powers for public workers take effect today, the Kaukauna Area School District is poised to **swing from a projected \$400,000 budget shortfall next year to a \$1.5 million surplus due to health care and retirement savings.***

The Kaukauna School Board approved changes Monday to its employee handbook that require staff to cover 12.6 percent of their health insurance and to contribute 5.8 percent of their wages to the state's pension system, in accordance with the new collective bargaining law, commonly known as Act 10.

*"These impacts will allow the **district to hire additional teachers (and) reduce projected class sizes.**" School Board President Todd Arnoldussen wrote in a statement Monday. "In addition, time will be available for staff to identify and support students needing individual assistance through individual and small group experiences."*

[Marshfield News Herald.](#) (July 1, 2011) Insurance change gives school districts savings

*Marshfield School District expects to **save \$850,000 for the upcoming school year in health insurance costs** by dropping Security Health Plan as a carrier and switching to WEA Insurance Trust.*

"We bid on our insurance services each year to make certain we're getting competitive pricing," said Marshfield business director Patrick Saucerman. "We discovered WEA came in with a highly competitive bid. There are some changes in the plan structure, but we felt it was the better option."

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.](#) (July 1, 2011) Eleventh-hour insurance switch saves school district \$690,000

*The Hartland-Lakeside School Board voted during a special meeting Thursday to **switch insurance providers and save \$690,000**, despite an attempt by the executive committee of the union that represents teachers at Arrowhead High feeder schools to block the change.*

[Appleton Post Crescent](#). (July 5, 2011) Neenah board lowers cost of teachers' contract by \$3.4 million

Paul Hauffe, director of business services, said the changes in the manual result in a 4.3 percent decrease in the total salary and benefits package for teachers.

The manual requires teachers to pay 12.6 percent of their health and dental insurance premiums in accordance with the new law. The school district will pay the balance, or 87.4 percent.

Teachers also will pay a 5.8 percent contribution toward the Wisconsin Retirement System.

*Hauffe said Neenah faced a \$4.6 million deficit next year as a result of the Walker-led budgetary changes. **Now, with a \$3.4 million savings from policy changes and a \$1.3 million savings from staffing cuts, administrators are poised to introduce a balanced budget in mid-July.***

[Appleton Post Crescent](#). (July 5, 2011) Wisconsin schools get less state money

"With the reduced aid, we've pretty much made up most of it through the (Act 10) 'tools,' if you will, that Gov. Walker is giving us. It's confirming where we were planning to be at this point. I think we're in good shape for next year."

[Appleton Post Crescent](#). (July 5, 2011) Editorial: The good, bad about AASD health insurance

*There's one thing that's indisputable about the **Appleton Area School District being able to save \$3 million on its health insurance plan:***

It wouldn't have happened without the cut in state aid pushed by Gov. Scott Walker and approved by the Legislature as part of the budget bill.

There's another thing that's plausible about the health insurance plan:

It probably wouldn't have happened without the looming elimination of teachers' collective bargaining powers.

The school district bid out its health insurance for the first time in six years, as part of contract extensions with its employee unions. The result? It's getting the same coverage it had been, from the same insurance carrier it had been, for \$3.1 million less.

[Manitowoc Herald Times Reporter](#). (July 5, 2011) Valders schools support staff to see pay increase

*Another change in the contract is that the support staff, like the rest of the district's employees, will receive their insurance through the Wisconsin Counties Association rather than through the Wisconsin Education Association. **The change will save the district \$60,000,** Hunt said.*

[Marshfield News Herald](#). (July 6, 2011) State aid for Marshfield schools down \$2.4 million

*"Given the cost savings with health insurance and the turnover with staff and new hires, we will be able to **preserve our programs and come up with a balanced budget**," said Peg Geegan, the district's director of instruction who will assume the superintendent's position Aug. 1. The district will **save \$850,000 by switching health insurance carriers**.*

[Green Bay Press Gazette](#). (July 11, 2011) Green Bay area school districts grapple with budget cuts

Even without the changes, the Green Bay district faced a \$5 million deficit based on expected increases in fixed costs such as wages and benefits and energy.

Last school year, the district was able to increase the tax levy by \$200 per student, so Wagner said he estimated the tax levy impact for 2011-12 at a \$734 per-student loss or \$15 million — bringing the total projected shortfall to \$20 million.

*But changes to the collective bargaining law will **save the district about \$12 million**. Most employees now will pay 12 percent of their health care benefits rather than 6 percent, and will pay 5.8 percent toward retirement benefits.*

*Some district employees — including custodians, paraprofessionals and clerical workers — will be under an old contract in 2011-12. They won't pay more for benefits until 2012-13. That, then, will **save the district another \$1.9 million**, Wagner said.*

Still, the district faces an \$8 million deficit for 2011-12.

*Administrators will be able to trim costs **without increasing class sizes or otherwise impacting students or programming**, Wagner said.*

*Ashwaubenon workers also will pay more toward health insurance and retirement benefits, **saving the district about \$910,000**. The district also reduced staff by the equivalent of 7.35 full-time employees. It will **save \$900,000 by changing health care provider networks**, Lucius said.*

[Appleton Post Crescent](#). (July 12, 2011) Kaukauna teachers object to policy changes

The rules also reduce teacher sick days from 10 days to five days, eliminate teacher pay for emergency school closings, such as snow days, and give district leaders the option of furloughing staff members. An updated operating budget also institutes \$300,000 in merit pay for staff, to be awarded at the school board's discretion.

Business manager Bob Schafer estimates the school district will swing to a \$1.5 million surplus next year from an anticipated \$400,000 budget deficit amid a \$2.7 million cut in state aid.

[Fox 6](#). (July 14, 2011) **Budget repair law leaves most school districts in good financial shape**

*That could have been a catastrophe for school finance directors like Koczela. She says **her and her colleagues in other districts got help from Governor Walker's budget repair law**. "We all knew that our revenue cap was dropping in an unprecedented way, but we also all knew that we had unprecedented financial opportunity."*

*Koczela says you can think of a school budget as a pie divided up into four quarters. Two quarters are staff salaries, One quarter is benefits, the other quarter is everything else. **"So when you had to balance the budget and couldn't touch three quarters of it, it came pretty tough."***

[Ozaukee Press](#) (June 15, 2011) **Preliminary PW-S budget erases \$1.9 million deficit**

*Two months after critics accused the Port Washington-Saukville School Board of mortgaging the district's financial stability to give teachers a new contract, the board approved a preliminary budget that **erases a \$1.9 million deficit** without compromising educational programs or raising taxes.*

*The board voted unanimously to approve a 2011-12 spending plan that relies on a number of spending reductions and revenue sources to balance the budget, **none more significant than a one-year teacher contract that is estimated to save \$1.5 million.***

[MequonNow](#). (July 22, 2011) Mequon-Theinsville employee's health premiums to increase 5%

***Mequon - School district employees will be required to increase their health insurance contributions from 5 to 10 percent** beginning in September. The change, officials say, is an effort to **free up more dollars for classroom** use, yet offer comparable benefits in a competitive marketplace.*

*The School Board this week approved the additional pay-in by district staff, which is expect to result in **cost savings of about \$260,000** in the 2011-12 school year, Superintendent Demond Means said.*

Mequon Now (July 22, 2011) [Mequon-Thiensville switches health, dental plans](#)

*Beaudry said several factors led to the WCA Group Health Trust recommendation for health coverage. She said the district stands **to save 8.9 percent in the first year of implementation** by making the switch from WEA Trust.*

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#). (July 22, 2011) Milwaukee County workers could pay more for benefits

The finance committee endorsed a 20% reduction in future pension credit for the 3,500 members of the county's largest union, District Council 48 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. New hires also would have to work to age 64 instead of 60. The changes had already been made for other county workers and can now

be unilaterally imposed on the AFSCME workers **under collective bargaining restrictions approved by the state.** The changes also apply to the much smaller Building and Trades union members.

The changes are expected to save about **\$3 million** next year.

Weekly Standard (July 25, 2011) [Walker's Vindication](#)

On June 29 at 12:01 a.m., Koczela could finally breathe a sigh of relief. The budget repair bill—delayed for months by protests, runaway state senators, and a legal challenge that made its way to the state's supreme court—was law. **The 27 teachers on the chopping block were spared.**

With "collective bargaining rights" limited to wages, Koczela was able to change the teachers' benefits package to fill the budget gap. Requiring teachers to contribute 5.8 percent of their salary toward pensions **saved \$600,000.** Changes to their health care plan—such as a \$10 office visit co-pay (up from nothing)—saved **\$200,000.** Upping the workload from five classes, a study hall, and two prep periods to six classes and two prep periods saved another **\$200,000.** **The budget was balanced.**

[Manitowoc Herald Times Reporter.](#) (July 25, 2011) County overtime changes cost-effective

County Executive Bob Ziegelbauer said the changes are expected to **save about \$100,000** annually on an overtime bill that in 2010 had ballooned to \$358,000.

It's the new reality that arrived in whirlwind fashion following introduction — and subsequent passage — of the controversial budget repair bill of Gov. Scott Walker earlier this year.

...— but **we give Walker credit** for focusing attention on the need to get a handle on runaway spending at the state and municipal levels.

The state's deficit has been virtually wiped out and surpluses may be in the offing. Local governments — often with economic guns to their heads — are following suit.

[Fond du Lac Reporter.](#) (July 28, 2011) FdL School District expects balanced budget

"We are hopeful that the combined total of these savings equaling **\$4.36 million dollars will result in a balanced budget.** To achieve this while also being able to replace our retirees so that class sizes, programs, and **learning opportunities are maintained** should be viewed as a successful resolution during increasingly challenging times," the two school leaders said in the statement.

[Wisconsin Reporter.](#) (August 2, 2011) Schools prove savings though the state budget

Edgerton School District Superintendent Dennis Pauli, [told Gazette Xtra](#) that simply by switching health-care providers, the district could **save up to \$500,000** during the next year.

*"Given the cost savings with health insurance and the turnover with staff and new hires, we will be able to **preserve our programs and come up with a balanced budget**," Peg Geegan, superintendent of Marshfield School District, [told the Marshfield News Herald](#).*

But perhaps one of the greatest savings in the reported in the governor's release was in Kaukauna.

*[The Post Crescent reported](#) that the **district would be going from a \$400,000 deficit to a \$1.5 million surplus because of the change in collective bargaining law.***

[Fond du Lac Reporter](#). (August 2, 2011) City manager: 2012 budget will be tough

***School Board President Eric Everson recently announced an expected balanced budget due to Gov. Scott Walker's initiatives.** He said a \$4.4 million budget shortfall will be made up through \$4.6 million in savings through teacher and staff retirements, and a hike in employee benefit contributions.*

***"Our balanced budget is definitely because of the Budget Repair Bill,"** Everson said.*

[Appleton Post Crescent](#). (August 3, 2011) Union law helps Appleton schools balance budget

APPLETON — The Appleton Area School District will have a balanced budget in 2011-12, thanks in part to having 1,600 employees contribute more toward their pension and health care benefits.

Hietpas said the reduction in the district's taxing authority will be covered largely by the \$7.5 million more employees will pay toward retirement and their health insurance premiums.

Hietpas said Appleton's property tax levy will drop by about \$700,000, which means a slightly lower tax rate for school purposes.

*"It's a very early projection, but that tax rate could possibly go down 9 cents (per \$1,000 of equalized valuation)," Hietpas said. **"That will be good news for taxpayers."***

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#). (August 9, 2011) Milwaukee to see net gain from state budget

Despite early criticism from city officials, new figures show Milwaukee will gain more than it will lose next year from the state's controversial budget and budget-repair legislation.

***The city projects it will save at least \$25 million a year - and potentially as much as \$36 million in 2012** - from [health care benefit changes](#) it didn't have to negotiate with unions, as a result of provisions in the 2009-'11 budget-repair measure that ended most collective bargaining for most public employees.*

*As a result, the city would come out with a **net gain of at least \$11 million for its 2012 budget**, slicing into the "structural deficit" created by costs rising faster than revenue and reducing the spending cuts that Mayor Tom Barrett and the Common Council must impose.*

[Appleton Post Crescent](#). (August 10, 2011) Kaukauna schools change insurance carriers

"The district will be able to provide nearly the exact same coverage to its staff members at a cost that is 8 percent less than it would have paid through the previous carrier." Todd Arnoldussen, president of the school board, said in a statement.

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#). (August 10, 2011) Editorial: Sky isn't falling

So it turns out that the sky isn't going to fall on all local governments in Wisconsin. The numbers now starting to come in show that Gov. Scott Walker's "tools" for local governments apparently will help at least some of them deal with cuts in state aid imposed by the state budget.

That's contrary to the expectation and the rhetoric of critics in the spring, and it's to Walker's credit. **It bears out the governor's assessment of his budget-repair bill,** although we still maintain he could have reached his goals without dealing a body blow to public employee unions.

[Hudson Star Observer](#). (August 11, 2011) New insurance plan will save school district \$1 million plus

Health Partners and Delta Dental will provide the insurance to Hudson School District employees beginning Oct. 1. **The change will save the district an estimated \$1.1-1.2 million annually.**

The Hudson Board of Education voted unanimously to change carriers at their Tuesday night meeting. Previously the insurance was provided by the Wisconsin Education Association Trust which was associated with WEAC, the state teachers' union. **Prior to the state's elimination of most collective bargaining rights by public employees, district insurance benefits were not subject to competitive bids.**

[Appleton Post Crescent](#). (August 15, 2011) Aid cuts leave difficult choices for schools, municipalities

And in Waupaca County, if you look just at state shared revenue cuts and savings from pension and health care changes, the county would see a **net gain of \$400,000**, said finance director Heidi Dombrowski. But she said that calculation doesn't include cuts to other state grants and programs

Neenah reports it is losing \$490,421 in state aids while **finding \$400,000** in pension and health care savings from city and water utility employees.

The School District of Waupaca faced a shortfall of about \$200,000 after aid cuts and pension changes. **But it will offset that through health insurance changes,** said Carl Hayek, the school district's business manager.

[Manitowoc Herald Times Reporter](#). (August 16, 2011) Manitowoc Council OKs **re-hiring 5 workers**

*She noted city savings **due to actions taken by Gov. Scott Walker** and the City Council — including staff reductions and additional health insurance premium and pension contributions — may exceed anticipated governmental cuts and increased costs.*

[Racine Journal Times](#). (August 16, 2011) Speakers say Unified should retain employees

*The district's 2011-12 interim budget - an approved document that covers the district from the fiscal year start in July, to October when enrollment and state aid figures are known - is about \$243.2 million, \$26.1 million less than last year. **It includes about \$25 million in savings that make up for the deficit of that amount the district started with for 2011-12.***

The deficit was recouped largely through staff reductions and employee concessions such as wage freezes, switching to a high-deductible insurance plan and contributing more toward retirement, Hazen said.

[Appleton Post Crescent](#). (August 18, 2011) Menasha Town Board plans budget workshop for Aug. 24

*The town is facing a loss of \$199,449 in state aid for 2012 but will see pension and health care savings of **\$105,059 for town employees due to the elimination of collective bargaining** powers and having public employees contribute more to their benefits.*

*The town will also see a savings of **\$71,186** in pension and health care costs for town utility employees but that only impacts utility rates, not the general town operating budget.*

[Shawano Leader](#). (August 22, 2011) Clintonville school budget dropping 21%

*Taxpayers in the **Clintonville School District will likely see a reduction in their school tax bills** this year at least partly because teachers and administrators are paying a larger portion of their health insurance and pension costs.*

The district's debt service will be down \$300,000, according to Goldschmidt.

Also the district is able to recoup \$493,000 with the teachers and administration paying a larger portion of their health and pension.

[Oshkosh Northwestern](#). (August 23, 2011) Oshkosh schools look to save millions

The Oshkosh district requested proposals from providers after its labor unions gave the board full control over health insurance as part of a one-year collective bargaining agreement.

The district hopes to drive down costs by taking advantage of newfound competition between insurance companies hungry to break into the education market, which has so far been dominated by WEA Trust, a nonprofit provider run by the state teachers' union.

*Many districts, including Oshkosh, have previously tried to switch providers for lower rates, but **local unions staunchly refused the offers**. They argued for-profit companies would make up the difference with larger rate hikes in future years.*

*But **unions no longer have a say in the matter** since the state Legislature approved a law preventing most public sector unions' from bargaining over anything but wages.*

Germantown Now (August 23, 2011) [Germantown schools adopt revised insurance plan](#)

A motion to raise employee contributions by 15 percent was defeated by a 6-1 margin, as was a 10 percent contribution. Finally, it was decided on a 4-3 vote to set the employee contribution at 5 percent, just a 2 percent increase from the current rate, but saving the district an additional \$500,000.

Total savings with the changes would be around \$1.5 million, or about double what the district had initially hoped to save.

"The taxpayers have been carrying the burden for this Porsche plan," board member Diana Kline said. "I think they need a break."

[Beaver Dam Daily Citizen](#). (August 24, 2011) DC board gets first look at 2012 budget

*[County Administrator Jim Mielke] **He said he felt the budget repair bill saved far more than was expected, giving the proposed budget over \$500,000 excess in savings from employee contributions.***

[The Monroe Times](#). (August 25, 2011) District to spend \$1M less this year

*NEW GLARUS - The New Glarus School District's \$12.5 million 2011-2012 budget is almost **\$1 million less than last year's spending plan**, a decrease of 7.2 percent.*

*Staff concessions, including wage freezes and contributions toward retirement and insurance benefits, will cut expenditures by **\$494,000**.*

[Wisconsin Rapids Tribune](#). (September 6, 2011) Wood County budget starts with surplus

For the first time in 10 years, Wood County will enter the budget process with a surplus.

*The state's budget repair bill enacted this year requires public employee contributions of 5.8 percent to retirement plans. An almost **\$2 million** expected return of money to the general fund also could simplify this year's budget process for Wood County officials.*

When the Wood County Executive Committee starts its budget hearings at noon Tuesday, Room 115, at the Courthouse in Wisconsin Rapids, it will be working with an expected

2012 surplus of \$500,000, said Mike Martin, Wood County Finance director. **In each of the past 10 years, officials started the budget process with anticipated shortfalls of \$1.5 million or more.**

While the state decreased shared revenue for Wood County by about \$665,000, it also changed the employee retirement system to require employee contributions of 5.8 percent. Previously, employees did not contribute to the retirement system. The change should save the county about \$1.4 million in retirement system payments, Martin said.

[Portage Daily Register](#). (September 8, 2011) Co-pays would rise for workers: county employees would pay less in insurance; prescription cost cap gone

Columbia County and its employees are likely to see a substantial savings in the cost of health insurance, no matter which carrier the county eventually chooses.

But those savings have a cost - in the form of co-payments for office visits, which covered county employees don't pay now, and a removal of caps on out-of-pocket costs for prescription drugs.

Based on the quotes that the committee has now, Richmond said, the annual savings would be at **least \$638,000.**

Committee member Barry Pufahl said that, by his calculations, the annual savings could be as much as **\$2 million** if the county goes with the lower-cost provider, Dean.

That kind of savings, said committee member Mark Sleger, would mean that employees who get their insurance through the county could have as much as **\$30 more per paycheck** in take-home pay - more than enough, in most cases, to cover the additional co-payment costs that they would incur.

[Appleton Post Crescent](#). (September 14, 2011) Kimberly schools propose tax increase

KIMBERLY — Teachers this year agreed to a change in health insurance carriers that is expected **to save \$821,000** in the 2011-12 school year. Teachers also will pay half of their pension contributions, which yields **\$1.3 million in savings** to the district.

[Racine Journal Times](#). (September 14, 2011) Collective bargaining law allows county to change benefits, some employees unhappy

YORKVILLE - Racine County Executive Jim Ladwig, who proposed the changes, estimated the changes will save the county several hundred thousand dollars per year. Ladwig did not have specific figures Tuesday. **That is in addition to the estimated \$1.5 million savings in employee pension contributions that resulted from recent state collective bargaining changes.**

[Appleton Post Crescent](#). (September 16, 2011) Little Chute school taxes could drop on health care, pension savings

*LITTLE CHUTE — Aided by nearly \$1 million in concessions from the local teachers union on pension and health care costs, officials in the Little Chute Area School District expect to **slash taxes by 16 percent next year despite a cut in aid from state government**.*

School district officials proposed a \$4.3 million tax levy during Monday's school board meeting, down a little over \$800,000 compared with last year's \$5.1 million levy.

"We are anticipating an approximate 15 percent drop in our mill rate from \$11.31 (per \$1,000 in property value) to \$9.52," said Supt. Dave Botz.

*Under the proposal, the owner of a \$150,000 home would pay \$1,428 to the school district next year. Assuming no increase in property value, that amounts to a **\$269 tax cut** for that same homeowner.*

[Appleton Post Crescent](#). (September 19, 2011) Hearing set on Menasha schools budget

*Spending cuts approved last February, primarily from staffing reductions among teachers and paraprofessionals, produced a net savings of just over \$1 million. In addition, the new employee retirement plan contributions, a salary freeze for all employees and changes in health insurance plans provided almost **\$1.9 million in savings**.*

[Baraboo News Republic](#). (September 19, 2011) Several large county departments keep budgets modest

But the changes to collective bargaining laws that require public employees to pay a portion of their health insurance and retirement plans will save the department about \$130,000, Orth said.

Orth said cuts the department has made should not impact services already provided.

***"We didn't have to cut staff and we didn't have to cut services,"** he said. "We were very fortunate in that we can maintain services for 2012."*

[The Monroe Times](#). (September 20, 2011) **School taxes down for 2011**

*ALBANY - The Albany School District's 2011-12 budget is **expected to decrease about 4.8 percent** over last year's budget, according to school district officials.*

Reasons for the decrease in budget includes a switch in bus companies; teachers paying a greater percentage of their health insurance plans and into their retirement plan; sharing resources, like staff, with Juda and Monticello; and cutting one percent off across the board, said Albany School Board President Fairy Elmer.

*The tax rate for the 2011-12 school year **will drop to \$11.90, compared to \$12.01 last school year**, a decrease of 11 cents per thousand of assessed value, or about .9 percent. The school tax bill on a \$100,000 home would be \$1,190.*

[Appleton Post Crescent](#). (September 21, 2011) Appleton school **taxes to dip** slightly

Because of the state-imposed reductions in school districts' taxing authority and aid this year, the district made significant expenditure adjustments to balance the budget. Key are:

» *Shifting **\$8 million** in costs to employees who now pay more toward health insurance premiums and retirement benefits. (A new state law that eliminates most collective bargaining powers for most public employees also requires them to pay more toward their benefits.)*

» *A **\$3.1 million reduction in fees** charged by the district's health insurance carrier WEA Trust.*

[Green Bay Press Gazette](#). (September 21, 2011) Southern Door: School levy passes at annual meeting

*This is **significantly less** than last year's tax levy of \$9.5 million, Superintendent Joe Innis said.*

The levy passed without comment from either the seven-member School Board or the roughly half-dozen other people in attendance.

*The proposed 2011-12 mill rate of \$8.38 per \$1,000 represents a possible **savings of 53 cents** per \$1,000. The 2010-11 mill rate was \$8.91 per \$1,000. A final tax rate will be set at a later date.*

[Portage Daily Register](#). (September 22, 2011) Union rep: 'Influence' is the word, not 'negotiate'

*And Mike Goetz, representing the Wisconsin Professional Police Association - which represents sworn officers in the Columbia County Sheriff's Office - presented the ad hoc committee a petition Wednesday, calling for retaining existing coverage but changing the provider to Dean Care, at a **savings of about \$1 million**.*

[River Falls Journal](#). (September 23, 2011) School board annual meeting votes: Lower taxes, school forest

School district residents voted to approve a proposed school tax levy that's expected to drop for the average local property owner by almost 1%.

*According to school district Finance Director Chad Smurawa, a **big reason for the levy drop was the drop in district spending due to state legislation that forces teachers to pay 12.6% of their health insurance costs and half their pension contributions.***

[Oshkosh Northwestern](#). (September 26, 2011) Committee of employees, administrators recommends dropping union health insurance

The Oshkosh school district could save about \$774,000 this year and another \$1.3 million next year by leaving its union-affiliated health insurance for a new provider.

A committee of about 30 district employees, union representatives and administrators has recommended the school board ditch its insurance through the Wisconsin Education Association Trust, a non-profit company started by the state teachers' union, for a cheaper but equivalent benefits plan through the Wisconsin County's Association Group Health Trust.

WCA Group Health Trust will cost \$13.9 million in 2012 and \$14.6 million in 2013. By comparison, WEA Trust will cost \$14.6 million in 2012 and \$16.7 million in 2013.

Actual budget savings would differ from those numbers because the district's fiscal year starts in July.

The district could save \$773,607 immediately this school year by switching to WCA Group Health Trust on Jan. 1. The district also estimates health insurance under WCA would cost \$1.3 million less in 2012-13 and \$1.7 million less in 2013-14 than if the district stayed with WEA Trust.

Lower premiums also means savings for employees, who had their share of the cost increase from 5 percent of the premium up to 12 percent this year.

The monthly cost to employees under WCA is \$61 for individuals and \$138 for families, compared to the current rate under WEA of \$72 for individuals and \$159 for families.

Deductibles, coinsurance and prescription co-pays are the same for both plans.

[Green Bay Press Gazette.](#) (September 27, 2011) Green Bay School Board OKs \$235.6 million budget

"There have been no reductions in programs," said Alan Wagner, assistant superintendent of business and finance. *"Our biggest philosophy is not to do anything that would hurt services."*

*But changes to the collective bargaining law will **save the district about \$12 million.** Most employees now are required to pay more for health care benefits and toward retirement programs.*

Those changes left the district with an \$8 million deficit for 2011-12. Wagner said administrators will be able to trim costs without significantly increasing class sizes or otherwise impacting students.

"I believe we're still at a point other districts wish they could be at," Wagner said. "We can still make changes that have no direct affect on students."

[Beaver Dam Daily Citizen.](#) (September 27, 2011) Waupun anticipates lower school levy

"Our tax levy rate should be decreasing by 11 cents from the previous year. This means a home of \$100,000 in value would have a property tax decrease of \$11." Walters said at the Waupun Area School District Annual Meeting last night.

"Due to the Governor Scott Walker's budget the total amount the Waupun Area School District can levy for Fund 10 is being reduced by approximately 8 percent. While the district will also have a 10 percent reduction in state aid, the overall amount the district can levy still results in a reduction to our tax levy rate."

Menomonee Falls Now (September 27, 2011) [Germantown School Board uses Governor's 'tools' to reduce levy](#)

"Although we had to cut because per pupil aid was cut, we were able to make up almost exactly that with tools, so I think it's important people understand that."

Borden is referring to provisions contained in Gov. Scott Walker's budget-repair bill, which were designed to help local communities deal with cuts in state aid.

More than \$1.5 million was saved from insurance changes alone, about double what the district had hoped to save. By changing plans and increasing teacher contributions, the district was able to cut into the \$3 million deficit it was facing thanks to cuts in aid and revenue limits.

That has expenditures for 2011-2012 down to less than 2009-10 levels at slightly more than \$40 million, a \$3 million drop from the 2010-11 budget. The total levy falls 2.5 percent, more than \$780,000, to \$30.3 million...

*That **drops the tax rate** from \$10.28 to \$10.12 per thousand dollars of equalized value.*

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#). (September 28, 2011) Waukesha County levy rises less than 1% in Vrakas budget

*Waukesha - Waukesha County Executive Dan Vrakas presented his 2012 budget to the County Board on Tuesday night, a spending plan with a tax levy increase of 0.6% - **the lowest in nearly 30 years.***

Brookfield Now (September 28, 2011) [Elmbrook likely to see 7.6 percent tax levy drop](#)

Residents of the Elmbrook School District can expect to pay less for the school portion of their 2011 property tax bills, following preliminary approval of the district's proposed 2011-12 budget.

Residents voted at the district's annual meeting Monday to set a tax levy of about \$72 million, a 7.6 percent decrease from the 2010-11 tax levy.

*That puts the 2011 tax rate at \$9.75 per \$1,000 of property value, **down 8.8 percent from last year.***

*Based on equalized values, the owner of a \$300,000 home can expect to **pay \$2,925 this year in school taxes - down from \$3,207 in 2010.** However, property taxes will vary depending on actual assessed values.*

The motion to levy the annual tax was approved, 16-6, in an advisory vote by residents in attendance, which included School Board members.

[Fond du Lac Reporter](#). (September 28, 2011) Waupun school tax levy drops 2%

WAUPUN — This year, despite deep cuts to state equalization aid, residents should pay less at the local level for schools.

*Taxpayers attending the annual meeting of the Waupun Area School District on Monday night approved the proposed tax levy of \$10.1 million, **a decrease of about 2 percent**. This is a glimmer of good news for residents who were hit with a **13 percent increase in the school tax levy last year**.*

*District Business Director Brian Walters said the proposed budget includes a projected tax rate of \$10.61 per \$1,000 of property value, **a decrease of 11 cents or 1 percent from last year**. The tax levy is expected to decrease around \$108,091.*

*Despite \$1.6 million in spending cuts and **\$2.3 million in savings** from union concessions and staffing reductions, Walters says the district will still have a budget deficit of \$400,000 with which to contend. School Board members are expected to cover the deficit with monies from the fund balance.*

[The Monroe Times](#). (September 28, 2011) Board approves \$36.5M budget

MONROE - The Monroe School Board Monday approved a total preliminary 2011-12 budget of \$35.6 million, a decrease of 5.54 percent from last year.

Monroe School District Business Manager Ron Olson presented the preliminary budget in advance of the district's annual meeting Monday, Oct. 17. It includes the \$1.87 million in cuts the district made after taxpayers rejected a four-year, \$8 million non-recurring referendum in April.

[Juneau County Star Times](#) (September 29, 2011) [Adjustments likely lead to lower school taxes in Wonewoc-Center](#)

*Following suit with the other four school districts in Juneau County, Wonewoc-Center School District will likely **see lower school taxes in the upcoming budget**.*

Wonewoc-Center School District Superintendent Art Keenan said Monday, "Part of the reason [for the decrease] is adjustments in transportation, and not so much of the budget is going for health insurance and retirement."

[Juneau County Star Times](#) (September 29, 2011) [Necedah, New Lisbon school districts expect drop in tax levy for new budget](#)

Despite a year rife with controversy and budget cuts, two local school districts expect to see a drop in their tax levies for the 2011-12 school year.

The Necedah Area School District tentatively set its tax levy during the July 25 annual meeting.

*The total school tax levy is \$4,964,687, which is **down 6.47 percent from the previous year.** With a mill rate of \$9.98 that equates to \$998 in school taxes for a \$100,000 house zoned within the district.*

Larry Gierach, superintendent of schools, said, "The expenses' side is done earlier in the year, which shows staffing, salaries and benefits, and all the other things are estimates."

Benefits have changed due to the state rescinding unions' collective bargaining.

Juneau County Star Times (September 29, 2011) [Mauston, Royall estimate lower tax levy for 2011-12 school year](#)

Two more Juneau County school districts are tentatively anticipating a lower school tax levy for the 2011-12 school year.

*Monday, School District of Mauston business manager, Julie Lankey-Smallwood said, "The total school levy for 2011-12 is estimated at \$8,952,135. This is **down 25 cents per \$1,000** of equalized property valuation."*

She said it is a 1.01 percent decrease from last year due to employees contributing to their pension and 12.6 percent of their health care costs.

The mill rate is estimated to be \$12.43, as compared to \$12.68 in 2010-2011. With a mill rate of \$12.43 that equates to \$1,240 in school taxes for a \$100,000 house zoned within the district.

[Oshkosh Northwestern.](#) (September 29, 2011) School board OKs new insurance provider, saving \$3.7 million

*The school board Wednesday approved switching health insurance providers for Oshkosh school district employees, **saving the system more than \$3.7 million over the next three years.***

The change will save \$773,607 immediately this school year. The district also estimates health insurance under WCA Group Health Trust will cost \$1.3 million less in 2012-13 and \$1.7 million less in 2013-14 than if the district stayed with WEA Trust.

Local unions had staunchly refused to leave WEA Trust until a new law prohibited them bargaining over anything but wages. A committee of about 30 people – including rank-and-file employees, union representatives and retirees - reviewed the offers before administration made its formal recommendation to drop WEA Trust.

[Wausau Daily Herald.](#) (October 03, 2011) Marathon County plans to cut worker benefits

*Marathon County intends to close a \$1.1 million budget deficit **without increasing property taxes, laying off employees or significantly reducing services.***

Instead, the county will balance its 2012 budget largely through increased employee contributions toward insurance and retirement, according to preliminary budget information from County Administrator Brad Karger.

*But the county no longer will pay for the full health insurance premiums and pension contributions for employees, a change that will **save taxpayers about \$2.3 million**. However, only about 60 percent of the savings counts toward the tax levy, Finance Director Kristi Kordus said.*

Karger said he initially was skeptical that the cuts to employee benefits would be enough to cover reductions in state aid of at least \$1.5 million.

"I thought that the tools the Legislature gave us to work with would be insufficient, and now I don't know if that's true," he said. "But that was my best belief at the time."

[Appleton Post Crescent](#). (October 04, 2011) Nelson's first budget holds tax hike below 2%

*APPLETON — Outagamie County Executive Thomas Nelson's first budget holds the tax levy increase below 2 percent, **an accomplishment he tied to the nearly \$3 million employees will kick in toward their Wisconsin pension plan** and sparing the county the expense in the process.*

Nelson acknowledged workers' sacrifices as he released his 2012 budget that carries a countywide tax of \$62,380,000, a 1.8 percent increase from the current year.

*"It is a result of many weeks of hard work and in many respects it's a milestone because it represents the **lowest levy adjustment in over 20 years**," Nelson said. "If there is one single overriding factor in the construction of this budget, it's the contribution of our employees."*

***Had employees not been required** to collectively return nearly \$3 million — or about 6 percent of their pay — toward their own pensions under a contentious budget provision, Nelson "would have had to re-look and **re-prioritize the level of services that we provided and the levy increase he wanted**," Massey said.*

[The Monroe Times](#). (October 05, 2011) School board approves reduced 2011-12 budget

*BLANCHARDVILLE - **The Pecatonica School District's 2011-12 budget is expected to decrease about 11.9 percent** compared to the 2010-11 budget, according to school district officials.*

About three school district community members and school board members approved the 2011-12 budget at the district's annual budget meeting Monday, Sept. 27. The budget is under \$6.6 million, compared to the almost \$7.5 million spending plan last year.

Reasons for the decrease include increased contributions teachers have to pay into their retirements and the school district's change in insurance companies. The teachers now have to pay 15 percent of their premiums, compared to the 5 percent teachers and zero

percent support staff had to pay in previous years.

*The tax levy, or the amount school district residents will pay towards the budget, is almost \$2.3 million, a **decrease of about 16.4 percent**, or \$444,668, from the almost \$2.8 million from the 2010-11 school year.*

The tax rate decreased from \$12.67 for the 2010-11 school year to \$10.14 this year, a decrease of about \$2.53 per thousand of assessed value, or about 20 percent. The school tax bill on a \$100,000 home will be \$1,014.

Appleton Post Crescent. (October 06, 2011) Neenah Joint School District board promotes lower-cost health insurance

*NEENAH — The Neenah Joint School District will offer its employees a new health insurance option next year that **could save taxpayers \$1.3 million annually**.*

The key will be convincing individual employees — teachers, administrators and exempt staff — to switch to a high-deductible health plan with a health savings account.

District administrators invited the Neenah support staff union, which is under contract through June 30, to reopen its contract to consider the high-deductible health plan/health savings account, but union leaders declined.

Holt said the new plan would be offered to support staff beginning Jan. 1, 2013.

Appleton Post Crescent. (October 11, 2011) Speakers question Appleton Area School District school savings

The school district saw a \$3.1 million reduction in fees charged by the district's health insurance carrier WEA Trust due to bidding out health insurance for this year.

Walt Nocito suggested the school district could have saved an additional \$2.3 million by going with a Network Health Maintenance Organization alternative rather than WEA Trust, which does not have an HMO.

The proposed tax levy of \$64.6 million is down by 1.49 percent, and the equalized tax rate of \$8.96 is dropping 13 cents from last year.

*With virtually no growth expected in property value this year that **should be a drop of about \$20** for the owner of a \$150,000 home.*

Sheboygan Press. (October 12, 2011) School Board hopes to hold line on taxes

*All the numbers aren't available yet, but from what the Sheboygan Area School District had on hand Tuesday, **the school district portion of residents' next tax bill will be almost the same.***

Gretchen Thomes, the district's assistant superintendent of business and operational services, said the projected tax rate, based on \$1,000 of property value, is **\$11.18**. This year's rate was **\$11.41** per \$1,000 of assessed value.

The district will also **decrease its total tax levy** — the amount collected by the district from taxpayers — by \$1.7 million, or **4.26 percent**, Thomes said.

Brookfield Now (October 13, 2011) [Proposed Town of Brookfield budget keeps levy steady](#)

Town of Brookfield officials are considering a 2012 budget that calls for **no tax levy increase and a 0.08 percent overall reduction in spending and revenue over last year.**

Town Administrator Rick Czopp's proposed budget calls for \$4.62 million in operating costs supported by a tax levy of about \$3.62 million.

"Our levy is staying exactly the same as it has for the last three years," Czopp said. "It's the status quo of budgets. **It maintains the essential services, and that's what the public expects.**"

New Richmond News (October 14, 2011) [Somerset School District proposes an 8.4 percent tax levy decrease](#)

When Gov. Scott Walker put tighter fiscal limits on Wisconsin schools earlier this year, it was supposed to give state residents with some tax relief.

As the Somerset School District works toward finalizing its 2011-12 budget, it looks like that tax relief will come through. At the 2011 school district annual meeting, held on Monday, Oct. 3, district residents voted to approve a preliminary budget which includes a tax levy that is 8.41 percent lower than last year...

The proposed property tax levy for the district is at \$7,393,583. That is a reduction of \$678,640 from last year's levy, a drop of 8.41 percent.

This would be the lowest levy in the district since the 2006-07 school year.

[Burnett County Sentinel.](#) (October 14, 2011) Siren electors say 'yes' to budget

Based on an estimated valuation of \$458,736,003, the district's levy approved Monday night was \$4,595,850, a **decrease of more than \$273,000, or 5.62 percent**, from the 2010-11 levy.

"That puts our mill rate at 10.02 percent," Johnson pointed out. "That rate is down from 10.61 percent for the 2010-11 school year."

In real numbers, the mill rate means taxes on a \$100,000 home would equal \$1,002, down from \$1,061 the same taxpayer would have owed in school taxes last year.

[Appleton Post Crescent](#). (October 14, 2011) Neenah taps reserves to lower taxes

NEENAH — School property taxes would **decline 2.1** percent next year under the latest version of Neenah's 2011-12 school district budget.

The decrease would lower school taxes on a \$150,000 property by **\$29**.

"We were able to attain a balanced budget this year mainly due to the tools given to us by the state Legislature," Lehman said.

[Sheboygan Press](#). (October 14, 2011) City of Sheboygan retirees may cause services scramble

"We have an opportunity to change a lot of staff and save a lot of money," Public Works Director Bill Bittner told the city Public Works Committee Tuesday night. **"There are a ton of opportunities in the new law to save money and actually improve service."**

Bittner said all the retirements were likely to create some staffing difficulties once the snow flies, but he figures the city will manage.

"We're very comfortable that we'll be able to provide these services," Bittner said.

What will help will be the ability to hire part-time workers and contract out some services, as now allowed under Walker's bill.

"With the number of retirements coming up, we have a number of opportunities with part-timers and outsourcing" to save money, Amodeo said.

[Public Policy Forum](#). (October 17, 2011) **Employee benefit savings are the key to "calm" city budget.** [Budget Brief](#).

"Dramatic savings related to employee benefits allow the city to offset state budget impacts and get by, for the most part, without significant cuts in valued services," according to the budget report. "Massive spikes in property tax levy-supported pension payments, however, as well as the loss of federal funds and flat or declining state revenues, pose a potentially serious threat to city services in 2013 and beyond."

The report cites nearly **\$37 million in savings** produced by increased employee contributions to pensions and health care and a major redesign of the city's health care offerings. Those savings – **which the report attributes to new requirements and flexibility granted under the state budget repair bill**, as well as changes in health care administration and plan design that were being pursued by the city prior to the bill's adoption – **fully offset a \$13.4 million reduction in state shared revenue and other state aids, leaving more than \$23 million to reinvest in departmental budgets and to build city reserves.**

[Portage Daily Register.](#) (October 17, 2011) Changes to continue for county's employees

Discussions have started on several key topics - including how the county will make decisions regarding the promoting, transferring or dismissal of employees, absent the union contracts that require seniority to be a key consideration in all of these matters.

*Susan Martin, chairwoman of the human resources committee, said **the county should consider creating an employee evaluation system that quantifies each employee's knowledge, skills and abilities.***

"While seniority will continue to play a role," she said, "it will no longer play a role in employee selection for transfer, or staff reductions, should it come to that."

[Eau Claire Leader-Telegram.](#) (October 18, 2011) Menomonie's proposed 2012 budget numbers look familiar

*MENOMONIE - **Despite a loss of revenue from the state, the preliminary 2012 Menomonie city budget calls for no tax levy or spending increases.***

Council members received the proposed 2012 budget Monday. Following at least one work session in the next few weeks, a version of the budget is scheduled to be approved in November.

*The city will receive \$3.32 million in state shared revenue next year, down from \$3.48 million this year. But even with cuts to state aid, the levy - taxes collected from local property owners to support city services - **the tax rate and overall spending are projected to remain unchanged from this year's figures.***

The levy would remain at \$5.7 million and the tax rate would be \$6.48 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. Overall city spending stays the same: \$14.1 million.

*The city was able to keep tax collections flat despite less state aid by deciding not to fill a vacant Streets Department position - a \$65,000 savings - and refinancing debt. **City officials also are saving money because employees are paying more for their retirement and health insurance.***

[The Monroe Times.](#) (October 19, 2011) **Tax rate expected to drop by 10%**

MONROE - Taxpayers in the Monroe school district will get some relief in the 2011-12 budget, but the district's financial obstacles won't go away.

*The proposed tax levy at the Monroe School Board's annual meeting Monday was \$11.18 million. However, after the district received final state aid numbers Oct. 14, the levy will be amended to \$11.09 million, **a 9.67 percent decrease from last year.***

*The tax rate will be \$11.13 per \$1,000 of assessed value, a 10.6 percent decrease from last year. Monroe School District Business Manager Ron Olson said the owner of a \$100,000 home will see their **school taxes decrease about \$133.** School taxes on a \$100,000 home would be \$1,113.*

[Manitowoc Herald Times Reporter](#). (October 19, 2011) Jobs spared in proposed 2012 Manitowoc County budget

MANITOWOC — **No layoffs are included** in the proposed 2012 budget County Executive Bob Ziegelbauer presented Tuesday to the Manitowoc County Board of Supervisors.

"We've gone through a bumpy patch over the last few years where because we didn't have the ability to make changes in our costs, we were forced with the choice of having to reduce the size of our staff," he said. **"Now we have more control over the costs of our compensation and by making modest changes, we'll be able to deliver."**

[Portage Daily Register](#). (October 20, 2011) County budget proposal calls for **no layoffs**

• Act 10, Gov. Scott Walker's budget repair bill, called on most county employees to begin paying a portion of their retirement costs. **"This change helped retain positions, fund operations and eliminated the need for a general fund subsidy,"** according to a summary of budget highlights. For 2011, Tramburg noted, the budget proposal included the elimination of several jobs and reductions in hours for several more. Some of those were restored, just before the budget was adopted Nov. 9, by dipping into the county's reserves.

[Pierce County Herald](#). (October 21, 2011) **Levy goes down** in Ellsworth School District's final budget

The Ellsworth School Board finalized the district's 2011-12 budget Wednesday.

The total school levy in the final budget is \$8,597,688, down from the projected total of \$8,619,845 presented at the district's annual meeting in August. The final levy figure represents a 9.27 percent change from last year's budget. It was approved for certification by the board, along with the final budget overall.

[Appleton Post Crescent](#). (October 24, 2011) Taxes, spending cut in Winnebago County budget

OSHKOSH — Taxes and spending would continue a decade-long decline in Winnebago County's proposed 2012 budget, but taxpayers continue to shoulder a larger portion of the costs than in recent history.

County Executive Mark Harris has proposed a \$154.7 million total budget for 2012, a 0.2 percent decline from 2011, and a \$68.2 million tax levy, 0.6 percent down from 2011. The budget would **decrease the tax rate from \$6 per \$1,000 of equalized property value in 2011 to \$5.95 in 2012.**

Harris said changes in state law that require public employees to contribute to their pensions and health insurance premiums yielded about **\$1.9 million in savings to offset those cuts, leaving the county with about \$144,000 more in savings than in lost cuts to state aid and grants.**

[Superior Telegram](#). (October 24, 2011) County spending declines in 2012

Douglas County is on stable financial footing, putting the county in a good position as it moves into a budget cycle that includes cuts in grants, shared revenue and intergovernmental revenue for services rendered to the state.

But tools provided in Wisconsin Act 10, which required public workers to pay a larger share of health insurance and retirement costs, didn't go far enough to offset the losses in state funding included in the 2011-2013 state budget.

"It's difficult trying to deal with all the major changes at the state level, **but we did it without major impacts to services and programs**," Doucette said.

Wisconsin State Journal (October 25, 2011) [Madison School Board OKs budget](#)

The Madison School Board unanimously adopted the 2011-12 district budget and tax levy on Monday, **saving the average Madison homeowner \$2.74 over their 2010-11 property tax bill**.

The \$372 million budget requires the district to levy slightly more than \$245 million in taxes, down 0.03 percent, or about \$62,000, from last year's levy.

SW News (October 21, 2011) [Boscobel School mill rate passed](#)

The tax levy for the Boscobel School District is \$2,480,610 for the 2011-12 school year.

That results in a mill rate of \$8.83 per thousand of equalized valuation, down from the \$8.93 figure for the 2010-11 school year.

Dr. Smith added that the district should expect to "**see the mill rate drop dramatically next year**," possibly down to around \$6.

Other news to come out of Tuesday's meetings included the board committing to Dean as the health care provider for district employees.

The commitment is contingent on finance committee approval of the final language of the plan to be submitted by Dean. The new plan takes effect Jan. 1 and is **expected to save the district \$550,000**.

[Appleton Post Crescent](#). (October 25, 2011) Spending down, taxes up in Kimberly school district budget

The school district was able to account for significant state aid reductions this year through employee concessions.

Teachers this year agreed to a change in **health insurance carriers that will \$821,000** in the 2011-12 school year. Teachers also will pay half of their pension contributions, which yields **\$1.3 million in savings to the district**.

Stevens Point Journal. (October 25, 2011) Stevens Point Area Public Schools **tax rate declines**

*Residents in the Stevens Point Area Public School District will **see their tax bills decrease** this school year.*

*At Monday's meeting, the School Board unanimously approved the proposed 2011-12 district budget, that includes **decreases in both the total levy and mill rate.***

The total school levy will be about \$31.1 million, a decrease of more than \$1 million from the 2010-11 school year. The levy was approved by the board in a separate, unanimous vote.

*School district taxpayers will see their mill rate drop from **\$8.37 to \$8.23** per \$1,000 of equalized property value. The owner of a \$100,000 home would pay \$823 for the school portion of his or her taxes.*

Eau Claire Leader Telegram. (October 25, 2011) School taxes up in Altoona, Chippewa Falls

*Property tax rates for education will rise in Altoona and Chippewa Falls but **drop in Menomonie**, as a result of 2011-12 budgets that were approved Monday night by school boards in those three school districts.*

*The Menomonie school tax rate will **drop 1.6 percent**, despite state aid cuts.*

*The 2011-12 tax rate is \$10.24 per \$1,000 equalized valuation compared with the 2010-11 tax rate of \$10.41. For the owner of a \$150,000 home in the Menomonie school district, the property taxes for schools will be \$1,536, **down \$25** from \$1,561 in 2010-11.*

Beaver Dam Daily Citizen. (October 25, 2011) Dodge land levy down from last year

*With those numbers, the district made a few changes. **They saved \$260,000 by changing insurance carriers.** The 2.8 percent WRS contributions saved the district \$320,000.*

OPEB contributions saved \$138,000. Additionally, staff changes such as not replacing retired teachers and aids created \$158,628.

The proposed mill rate is \$12.998. down from \$13.421 in 2010-2011.

Beaver Dam Daily Citizen. (October 25, 2011) Waupun school board cuts budget, levy

*WAUPUN - Monday the Waupun Area School Board cut annual expenditures by \$1.38 million, and **lowered the tax levy 24 cents.***

*"Based on the new levy rate of \$10.48, a home of \$100,000 value will see a **\$24 decrease** in school property taxes from last year while a home of \$200,000 value will see a decrease of \$48 in their school property taxes," said Brian Walters, director of Business Services.*

[Baraboo News Republic](#). (October 25, 2011) School levy takes a trim

For the 2011-2012 school year, Baraboo school taxes will cost the owner of a \$200,000 house about \$100 less than last year.

The Baraboo School District agreed Monday night to reduce its tax levy by \$1 million and approve a proportionately lower tax rate.

[Shawano Leader](#). (October 26, 2011) **Final school tax rate below last year**

The Shawano Board of Education on Monday approved a slightly lower than projected tax rate for the coming year.

Board members unanimously approved the school district's tax levy of \$11.9 million, a drop of 0.65 percent or nearly \$77,860 from this year's \$12 million levy.

The levy translates to a tax rate of \$8.98 per \$1,000 of equalized value, compared to this year's rate of \$9.20. That means the owner of a \$100,000 home can expect to pay \$898 in school taxes this year, compared to \$920 last year.

[Beloit Daily News](#). (October 27, 2011) Town of Beloit makes budget cuts

*The Town of Beloit Board of Trustees made \$96,000 in budget cuts at its budget workshop held Tuesday afternoon in order to balance the budget, with no surplus. **Town of Beloit residents will see no property tax increases in 2012, said Town Chair Robert Pavlik.***

Another cut was requiring employees to contribute \$60 per paycheck to their health benefits for a savings of \$48,360.

"The board feels that's a reasonable step to take considering that most people in private industry make some contributions to their health benefits. We are asking all of the employees of the town to do that," he said.

There were a variety of smaller cuts made, including asking employees to pay 4 percent of their retirement for additional savings.

[Wausau Daily Herald](#) (October 22, 2011) **Changing health insurer cuts \$1.2M combined for Tomahawk, Merrill schools districts**

*The Tomahawk and Merrill school districts will **save \$1.2 million combined -- and avoid cutting teachers and programs** -- by dropping an insurance provider created by the state's largest teachers union, officials said.*

*Tomahawk's decision to switch insurance providers was purely financial, Superintendent Roger Rindo said. **The \$750,000 in savings from the change helped the district preserve programs and teacher positions while it cut \$1.2 million from its \$15 million budget.***

A political whirlwind swirls around WEA Trust. Critics of the insurance trust have charged that it hamstrung Wisconsin school districts with high insurance rates while affiliated teachers unions bargained hard to win contracts for WEA Trust.

The passage of Wisconsin's Act 10 earlier this year allows school districts to choose health insurers and levels of coverage without having to bargain with unions. Under the new law, most public employee unions can bargain only over salaries with their employers.

*Merrill Area Public Schools is saving about **\$475,000** this school year by changing insurers for teachers and custodians, said Louise Fischer, finance director. Coverage for administrators and other nonunion employees was switched for the 2010-11 school year. The change was negotiated with the Merrill Teachers Association before Act 10 went into effect.*

*Tom Andreska, president of the Merrill teachers union, said the association agreed to the change because it helped **save the jobs of 30 teachers.***

[Manitowoc Herald Times Reporter.](#) (October 31, 2011) *Editorial: Tax situation could be worse*

This all could have turned out worse in the politically charged environment in which budget negotiators had to do their jobs this time around. There was a lot thrown at them in a short time, involving concrete changes and new philosophies. They adapted remarkably well and are keeping the bottom line manageable for taxpayers.

The difficulty will be to sustain that in the long run, given the same rules. But that's a different problem, for a different day.

For now, enjoy the relative calm of the property tax waters.

[Juneau County Star-Times.](#) (October 31, 2011) *County budget hearing is Tuesday*

"The big thing is, with Governor Walker's budget bill, we didn't have to lay off anybody, which would have had to happen without it," board Chairman Al Peterson said.

Concessions by public employees forced by Walker's budget and lowered health insurance costs made budgeting easier this year than in recent years, Peterson said. "We still have to really watch the dollars," he said.

[La Crosse Tribune.](#) (November 1, 2011) *School board adopts smaller budget*

Taxpayers would save about \$10 on a \$100,000 property, though the exact amount won't be known until December.

"We anticipate that most taxpayers are going to see just about the same (rate), if not a little bit less," Superintendent Randy Nelson said.

Officials estimate a 10-cent cut, to a rate of \$10.28 for every \$1,000 in assessed property value. The drop would follow four straight years of rate increases.

Workers agreed to pay 12.6 percent of their health insurance premiums and make equal contributions to retirement in contract extensions signed before collective bargaining changes took effect. The board's approval means "**we can be on with our business, in confidence that we're in good stead.**" Nelson said.

Wisconsin Dells Events (November 2, 2011) [School taxes to go down](#)

Taxes on a \$100,000 home would decrease by \$17.80, she said.

Mequon Now (November 4, 2011) [Mequon-Thiensville levy decreases by 6.3 percent](#)

A property owner with a home valued at \$350,000 will experience a projected \$108.50 decrease in the school portion of the property tax bill.

In recent months, a number of changes led to the 6.3 percent decrease, reflecting a \$37,795,126 amount levied on taxpayers in Mequon and Thiensville. Gail Grieger, business services manager, said the amount was the maximum the district could levy based on the state's revenue-limit formula.

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#). (November 7, 2011) Washington County **keeps taxes flat**

A countywide tax rate needed to generate the levy - \$2.85 per \$1,000 of equalized value - remains unchanged from this year, Administrative Coordinator Doug Johnson said. The owner of a \$200,000 home with no change in assessed value will pay the same amount in county property taxes for 2012 as for this year, about \$570.

Herald Times Reporter (November 7, 2011) [Highway department gears up for winter](#)

MANITOWOC — The Manitowoc County Highway Department is preparing for another winter, but this year it's with help from 10 additional full-time crew members.

Kennedy said during the last couple years a lot of money had been taken away from the highway department, but because of the budget repair bill, it is starting to get some of that money back.

"For us, Act 10 was a very good law," he said. "Act 10 gives us more flexibility, which helps us save money and be more efficient."

[The Tomah Journal](#). (November 8, 2011) County Board approves 2012 budget

"True to their word, the state did cut our shared revenue by \$369,186," Schmit said. Shared revenue cuts will be offset by employee contributions to the state retirement fund. The county tax levy was set at \$15,219,759; up from \$14,993,660 in 2011.

On a brighter note, **the mill rate will decrease from \$5.95 in 2011 to \$5.938 in 2012.**

The reduction will mean a \$1.17 decrease in county property taxes for a \$100,000 home owner in the county.

[Green Bay Press Gazette](#). (November 8, 2011) Brown County Board OKs budget, holds levy at \$81 million

*In an 11th hour vote, the Brown County Board on Monday adopted a spending plan that **holds the county's property tax levy steady** at about \$81 million.*

Muskego Patch (November 8, 2011) [Muskego School Board Makes Decision On Insurance, Saving \\$2 Million](#)

*Previously recommending Humana, Ecker said the other carriers 'further sharpened their pencils' and brought new numbers in that couldn't be ignored. Citing "an aggressive climate of health insurance" Ecker said the costs for a new option (option 4) with United Health Care "yielded savings ...beyond what was anticipated" to the tune of **more than 27 percent and \$2 million** to the district. Ecker told the board he switched his recommendation to United.*

For district employees, the move retains more than 96 percent of the providers that they currently have, and will cost only \$5 more in out-of-pocket costs than Humana. In addition, employees with a family plan will save \$450 annually versus what they would pay out-of-pocket with the WEA Trust plan.

The savings made some on the board ponder what could have been saved if they hadn't had to stay with WEA Trust in previous years.

"Have we been paying \$2 million more, and I know that's not the case, and our employees paying more on their premiums than they should have? To me that's the only disappointment," board member Eric Schroeder said.

[Wausau Daily Herald](#). (November 9, 2011) Marathon County presents 2012 budget

*Marathon County Administrator Brad Karger described the county's proposed 2012 budget as the "no, no, no budget" -- **no tax increase, no service cuts and no employee layoffs** -- at a Tuesday night public hearing on the plan.*

*Despite state budget cuts of more than \$1.1 million, the three "no's" **were only possible because of a controversial state law passed this year**, which sharply limits public employee unions' collective bargaining abilities.*

Oshkosh Northwestern (November 10, 2011) [Health insurance changes at Winneconne schools means no referendum for at least one year](#)

An overhaul of teachers' health insurance benefits gives Winneconne taxpayers a window of at least one year before the district asks for extra money through another referendum.

This will be the first time in at least 10 years the Winneconne Community School District's operating budget has not been supported by supplemental funding from a referendum.

"We've always said to the taxpayers of the Winneconne school district if we don't need the money, we're not going to ask for the money," said school board president Dale Burghardt.

Voters in 2010 approved a referendum allowing the district to tax an additional \$850,000 above its state-imposed revenue cap for two years. That referendum will expire at the end of this school year.

*Health insurance changes approved by the school board on Nov. 8 will **save the district \$700,000**, which is enough to prevent the need for budget cuts or a new referendum for the upcoming 2012-13 school year, said Superintendent Peggy Larson.*

The health insurance changes include dropping coverage through the union-affiliated Wisconsin Education Association Trust in favor of less expensive health maintenance organization, or HMO, plan through Network Health Plan. The board also voted to increase employees' deductibles.

Shawano Leader. (November 14, 2011) Bonduel proposes **lower tax rate**

The proposed budget includes a tax rate of \$8.49 per \$1,000 of equalized valuation, compared to this year's \$8.56. That means an owner of a \$100,000 home will pay about \$849 in village taxes next year, compared to \$856 this year.

Baraboo News Republic. (November 15, 2011) Baraboo schools find ways to deal with budget changes

*In Baraboo, budget cuts cost the district \$1.6 million in state aid, not quite balancing the **\$1.5 million in money saved through district employees' extra payments for health insurance and retirement benefits, mandated by Walker's budget reform law.***

In the end, Walker's cuts did not directly harm Baraboo's staffing numbers or programs, District Administrator Crystal Ritzenthaler said. She said the district was saved, in part, by \$675,000 in federal job stimulus aid the School Board had available.

***"We didn't have any programs cut or staff cuts. In fact, we added several positions,"** she said. The biggest problem for the district was the retirement of 25 veteran staffers, Ritzenthaler said.*

Beloit Daily News. (November 16, 2011) Rock County approves 2012 budget

*The county will be **saving \$2.9 million** per year by requiring unionized and non-union employees to pay 5.9 percent of their salaries into their pensions. This was a provision passed in the state's budget repair bill that requires all public employees (excluding sworn law enforcement personnel) to pay half the required Wisconsin Retirement System contribution, or 5.9 percent.*

[Portage Daily Register](#). (November 16, 2011) Marquette County also signs off on budget for 2012

Despite all those cuts in state funding, Gov. Scott Walker was able to deliver something to the county that was critical in balancing the budget.

"In Marquette County, we would not have been able to balance the budget without the budget-repair bill," Miller said in a phone interview. "One of the things we would have had to look at is eliminating programs; eliminating personnel."

That would have been a difficult task, he said, because the county is already running "near a barebones minimum."

[Lakeland Times](#). (November 16, 2011) Vilas board approves slight **levy decrease**

After hours of argument and counter-argument, Vilas County supervisors approved a budget that lowered the tax levy by 0.32 percent from last year.

The 2012 tax levy will total \$13,053,828, compared to this past year's \$13,095,526.

Tax levy limits forced the board to lower the tax levy.

[Wausau Daily Herald](#). (November 16, 2011) **Wausau property taxes won't rise under 2012 budget**

*The Wausau City Council on Tuesday approved a 2012 budget **that will hold the city's property tax rate at 2011 levels.***

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#). (November 17, 2011) County Board overrides most of Abele's budget vetoes

Abele took credit for progress on the county's "structural deficit," meaning the built-in imbalance between costs and revenue. That came largely through the shift in benefit costs to workers.

Three conservative supervisors said credit for helping to balance the county budget should go to Republican Gov. Scott Walker and his restrictions on collective bargaining that made possible the shift in employee benefit costs to the workers. Without the new state law, the county would have had to negotiate benefit changes with employee unions.

"Without Gov. Walker's reforms, the \$24 million in savings finalized by the board never would have materialized," Supervisors Joe Sanfelippo, Joseph Rice and Paul Cesarz said in a statement. None of them, however, voted for the budget earlier this month.

While the board reversed some of Abele's cuts, the county executive got most of what he had originally sought. The largest saving still comes through higher employee health and pension benefit contributions. All workers will pay 25% of the cost of their health insurance and more toward pensions.

[Shawano Leader](#). (November 18, 2011) City tax rate unchanged for 2012

*The tax levy for the city portion of property taxes is expected to total a little above \$4 million. **The tax rate is \$8.31 per \$1,000 of equalized valuation, the same rate as 2011. The owner of a \$100,000 home will pay \$831 in city taxes, same as 2011.***

[The Tomah Journal](#). (November 18, 2011) **Property taxes see slight decrease**

The lake district is a separate entity from the city, but the two entities cover the same geographical area.

*The combined mill rate for both the lake district and **city is \$7.66, down from \$7.82 last year.** The owner of a \$100,000 home will see a \$16 decrease in city taxes.*

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#). (November 21, 2011) MPS board increases workers' health insurance contribution

After their contracts terminate, employees begin operating under the Act 10 legislation signed by Gov. Scott Walker, which limits public unions' abilities to negotiate for items such as benefits, salaries and working conditions and allows districts to make broad changes in those areas.

Thornton pushed getting the benefit plan in place before the holidays so the administration could start making budget forecasts for next year.

He said the approved plan will reduce the expected deficit for MPS next year from \$20 million to about \$6 million.

*Over 30 years, the change will result in an approximately **\$900 million** reduction in the district's post-retirement benefit liability, Bonds said.*

"It almost cuts the unfunded liability in half," he said.

Though there was no public comment on the plan he introduced Thursday, Bonds said that wasn't his concern.

"The reality is we've pushed this issue aside for years," he said.

[Manitowoc Herald Times Reporter](#). (November 21, 2011) County executive forwards veto message

Ziegelbauer said since changes were made to the overtime policy in the summer, 83 percent of overtime paid continues to be in excess of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

"Here is our choice," he said. "We can have an overtime rule that is still significantly more generous than the already ample federal standard, or we can perpetuate a system where a few higher paid employees in a few departments can manipulate their incomes at the expense of the vast majority of the others."

[Oshkosh Northwestern](#). (November 29, 2011) School tax levies down for the **first time since 2005**

Until this year, the tax levy in Oshkosh had been increasing at an average rate of 5.5 percent annually. Between 2005 and 2010, the district's tax levy rose 33 percent, or \$10.1 million.

Walworth County Today (November 30, 2011) **Poor economy, state changes shape county budget**

*These three features of the state budget, tax caps, reduced aid payments and bargaining law changes, helped shape the county's 2012 budget. With state revenues cut and taxes frozen, the only way that the county could maintain the level of services that we have traditionally provided was through the tools provided by the state Budget Repair Bill. The biggest tool in the box is the requirement that most employees pay toward their pensions. As a result, teachers and non-represented county employees have been contributing 5.8 percent of their wages toward their retirement since this summer. In 2012, all employees, with the exception of sworn law enforcement personnel, will be paying as well. This contribution will **save the taxpayers more than \$2 million next year and is the single-most important reason why the county was able to freeze the tax levy without significantly impacting services.***

[Fond du Lac Reporter](#). (December 1, 2011) **North Fond du Lac School District saves big with new health insurance plan**

A new health insurance plan put in place will save the district more than a quarter million dollars next year.

The Board of Education on Monday approved a modified plan with the Wisconsin Education Association Trust that would retain the same physicians and network.

The WEA Trust lowered premiums for next year with the promise the school's wellness will be monitored to ensure that claims don't outrun premiums.

*Based on 44 single and 96 family plan enrollments, insurance costs will total \$1.89 million this year, \$1.6 million in 2012 and \$1.8 million in 2013. **Combined savings to the district for 2012 and 2013 will equal \$3.3 million.***

[Oshkosh Northwestern](#). (December 1, 2011) **Property tax bills down** slightly in Oshkosh

The state has yet to provide finance officials with details of the first dollar and lottery credits that reduce property tax bills each year, but preliminary totals indicate city residents should see an overall decrease of 3 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value. The decline in the combined tax rate from \$25.19 for 2011 to \$25.16 for 2012 translates to a \$3 reduction in taxes for the owner of a \$100,000 home.

The Oshkosh Area School District and Winnebago County were able to reduce property tax rates this year by a combined 22 cents per \$1,000 of property value by shifting pension and

health insurance costs onto employees to offset reductions in school revenue caps and state aids to the county.

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#). (December 2, 2011) Cost-saving moves help MPS over time

*The Milwaukee School Board deserves credit for voting to require employees to contribute more to their health insurance premiums - a move that is expected to **reduce the district's deficit next year from \$24 million to about \$8 million.** So does Superintendent Gregory Thornton and the teachers union.*

[Wisconsin State Journal](#). (December 6, 2011) Editorial: Sky isn't falling on public schools

*Here in Madison, the School Board **avoided teacher layoffs,** launched a 4-year-old kindergarten program, opened a new middle school and gave teachers raises based on years of experience.*

Yet teachers in Madison still took a hit in take-home pay because they are now contributing to their pensions.

*That financial burden shouldn't be ignored or minimized. Yet many private sector workers have fared a lot worse in this challenging economy. **And thanks to Walker's budget, homeowners are finally getting some property tax relief.***

*As for next school year, Madison is "**well-positioned for the future**," according to its assistant superintendent for business services. That's because the local School Board can still require its employees to contribute to the cost of their health insurance, and the district has some unused taxing authority.*

The WASDA survey didn't specifically explore how many districts across the state have similar flexibility for next year. But the survey did find that a net 3,368 education positions — nearly half of them teachers — have been shed across the state this year.

*That's a lot more than in recent years, which is disturbing. **But there's more to the story: If you remove a few of the big school districts, such as Milwaukee, that didn't or couldn't require their employees to contribute more to pensions and health insurance — meaning they didn't use the "tools" Walker gave them to absorb state aid cuts — staff reductions are relatively small.***

Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance (December 12, 2011) [School taxes fall for first time since 2006](#)

Overall, 269 of the state's 424 school districts either cut their levies or left them unchanged. Last year, that figure was 82, WISTAX said. Taxes were cut by 5.0% or more in 100 districts, and were either frozen or reduced by smaller amounts in another 169. Only 36 districts hiked their levies by 5% or more, compared to 159 last year.

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#). (December 12, 2011) School districts move toward merit pay for teachers

Changing compensation structures to reflect quality instead of education levels and seniority was a remote possibility just a year ago for most of Wisconsin's school districts. But then the Legislature and Gov. Scott Walker passed reforms that clipped unions' powers and gave district leaders the authority to make sweeping changes to working conditions, hours and compensation systems for teachers and staff.

[Jefferson County Daily Union](#). (December 15, 2011) County approves contracts

Under Act 10, Jefferson County's annual savings from union employee retirement and health insurance contributions is approximately **\$750,000**. Annual savings from retirement and health insurance contributions by the non-represented employees is approximately **\$558,000**.

[Appleton Post Crescent](#). (December 16, 2011) Appleton school employee handbook heads to Board of Education for approval

Mark Huenink, director of human resources, said the new language spells out a number of areas administrators can consider when determining teaching assignments, in addition to seniority. That list includes past teaching experience, practical background working with students, additional training, portfolios, testimonials and special skills and talents.

Teachers who wish to transfer to another assignment would be required to go through an interview process. If there is a disagreement, the principal makes the final decision.

Since 1978, the school district has based decisions on assignments, vacancies and transfers solely on where teachers fall on the seniority list. Huenink said the proposal "will allow the district to maximize the expertise of our staff to meet the learning needs of our students."

[La Crosse Tribune](#). (December 20, 2011) School district could see \$2.8M in cuts next year

The district can **save about \$1 million by switching health care insurance plans** — a move district officials have been considering, Nelson said. The state provides the district some flexibility next year with a provision that allows districts to bring in an extra \$50 per pupil through taxes, with matching aid from the state. That would add up to about \$670,000, according to the report.

Wisconsin State Journal (December 27, 2011) [New work rules set in as contracts lapse](#)

Jefferson County administrator Gary Petre said he no longer uses seniority to dictate who fills openings. And in the event of layoffs, workers with more seniority are no longer able to "bump" into jobs of less experienced workers, Petre said.

The change will ensure the ability to hire the very best workers and reduce the need to retrain employees who move into unfamiliar jobs after staff reductions, Petre said.

In Waukesha County, most road maintenance workers now work four 10-hour days to reduce the time spent each week setting up and tearing down work sites, said public works director Allison Bussler.

The county tried and failed for years to persuade the union to give up a provision requiring a five-day week, but now that the change has been made, **most are happy with it**, said Randy Monroe, the Teamsters representative for the union local.

It remains to be seen how plow drivers will react this winter when they are no longer paid overtime rates for any hours outside their 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m. shifts, Bussler said. New rules will allow the county to save money by sending them home after eight hours if they are called in to plow in the middle of the night, and premiums are no longer paid for being called in during off hours, she said.

Unlike other counties that have sought to cut overtime costs, Waukesha still pays time-and-a-half for weekend hours, even if they are part of a 40-hour week, Bussler said.

Wisconsin State Journal (January 6, 2012) [Not bad by Madison standards](#)

*Now, don't let all the numbers confuse you. **Here's the bottom line: Gov. Scott Walker's strict limits on public sector collective bargaining gave the Madison School Board leverage with its unions to limit raises and require 5 percent contributions to pensions**. The local school district also can save on employee health care costs in future years.*

Similar savings played out with school districts statewide.

[Sheboygan Press](#). (January 9, 2012) Merit pay coming for some city employees

The City of Sheboygan is working on creating a merit pay program for about 150 of its public works and City Hall employees whose union contracts expired on Dec. 31, officials said.

*Officials are using this year to measure salary benchmarks for the employees, most of them in the city's Public Works Department, with the plan to switch to a merit pay system in 2013, where workers would **receive pay increases based on their performance**, instead of through collective bargaining.*

"At the end of the day we want to be an employer of choice," Mayor Bob Ryan said. "We want people to come to work and do a good job, and to prosper under that system. In other words, the people that come to work and do a great job will be rewarded for that performance. And that's what we're looking at for the future."

[La Crosse Tribune](#). (January 15, 2012) Report: **Statewide property taxes see smallest increase in 15 years**

MADISON — Wisconsin's total statewide property taxes are up .3 percent in 2012 — the smallest increase in 15 years, according to the Wisconsin Taxpayers' Alliance.

The nonprofit tax research organization said the tax increase is small this year because the school levy, the largest part of a property owner's bill, dropped 1 percent. State-imposed revenue limits were the main cause for the reduction, the group said.

The last time property taxes were held to such a small increase was in 1996-97, when the state used \$1 billion in state tax revenues to "buy down" local school property-tax levies, the group said.

[Ashland Current](#). (January 15, 2012) **Bayfield County tax drops**, group says

Though statewide property taxes are up this year, Bayfield County is among five counties that cut taxes by one percent or more this year.

That analysis is from the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance, which reports statewide property taxes overall are up by 0.3 percent for 2012. Though an increase, it's the smallest in 15 years, the group says.

The group also says that county levy increases averaged 1.1 percent statewide for 2012, down from 1.9 percent in 2011 and 3.2 percent in 2010. Bayfield County, along with Winnebago, Marathon, Washington, and Brown counties, cut taxes by one percent or more, the group reports.

[The Monroe Times](#). (January 24, 2012) **Green County schools lower levies**

MONROE - Taxpayers in Green County and Lafayette County are faring better than the state average under the new revenue limits imposed on school districts.

Wisconsin school districts asked for \$4.65 billion in property taxes to fund the 2011-12 school year. That is 1.0 percent less than last year's levy of \$4.69 billion.

Public schools in Green County decreased their total levies by 4.24 percent compared to their total levies last year. The seven school districts are levying \$29.9 million, about \$1.3 million less than \$31.2 million levied for 2010-2011.

[Appleton Post Crescent](#). (January 27, 2012) *Editorial: Policy brings city benefits back to reality*

Under new rules effective in 2012 for most city employees — with the exception of police, fire and unionized Valley Transit workers — only 40 hours of unused vacation time can be carried over into the subsequent year.

That means a smaller payout for people who resign or retire, and it's a reflection of the notion that vacation is meant to be used.

Payouts like the one Walsh received weren't unusual. Through Jan. 10 of this year, seven employees resigned or retired, and the city paid out an average of 216 hours of vacation pay per person.

January 2011 payout figures were similar. That's because city workers who take another job or retire tend to wait until January so they get paid for their accumulated vacation hours. It would be silly to leave in December and miss out on the cash.

Allowing Appleton workers to carry over only 40 hours is a start. It's still a better benefit than many of the rest of us get.

But it's a way to rein in retirement or resignation packages that, in the end, cost taxpayers.

Wausau Daily Herald. (January 30, 2012) Wausau schools **expect budget stability**

The financial stability for next school year is good news, said Keith Montgomery, vice president of the Wausau School Board, but district leaders "have to look ahead, strategically, as well, and shape initiatives. ... I think we're doing that appropriately. I think we're being intentional and careful."

The district cut about \$1.4 million from its budget a little less than a year ago for the 2011-12 school year. The bulk of those cuts came from savings made from the retirement of more than 25 teachers. The School Board also reduced the number of high school teachers by nine and eliminated two elementary school positions. Those decreases were made through attrition, not layoffs.

Manitowoc Herald Times Reporter. (January 31, 2012) Manitowoc looks at sick leave, pay issues

In a provision that stands in contrast to previous contracts covering many city workers, seniority no longer would be the exclusive factor when it comes to layoffs.

"Management (will) retain those employees who are most qualified to perform the available work, regardless of length of employment," the draft reads.

Another proposed change states that sick leave cannot be accrued beyond 10 weeks and will be canceled upon termination of employment with no payment made. Accrued sick leave now goes into a "bank" and is drawn out after, for example, an illness that lasts longer than three days.

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. (January 31, 2012) Editorial: Board majority chooses jobs over saving money

*The Milwaukee School Board is once again ignoring Superintendent Gregory Thornton's request to explore privatizing a portion of the school lunch program. And that's just another sign that the board is **more concerned with saving union food service jobs than with saving money that could be better spent on educating kids.***

Wisconsin Rapids Tribune. (February 9, 2012) Wood County eyes new pay scale for public employees

*Wood County hopes to join other central Wisconsin counties for an employee study officials hope **will save taxpayers money and create a fair wage structure.***

Wood County has seven wage scales that were created through negotiations with county unions, said Ed Reed, Wood County Human Resources director. Now that the county is likely to lose at least five of seven unions, county officials' goal is to create one wage scale, he said.

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#). (February 11, 2012) WEA Trust tries to adapt to changes in state law

Emily Koczela, director of finance for the Brown Deer School District and a former member of the Shorewood School Board, said WEA Trust and the teachers union would work together in negotiations, such as including the company on emails to the school district.

"Even though they are legally separate, they are not separate in any sense," Koczela said. WEA Trust's strong ties with the teachers union in many districts also frustrated competitors.

*"We just want to be treated fairly," said Kim Hurtz, vice president of sales for Aegis Corp., which oversees the day-to-day operations of WCA Group Health Trust. **"Make the marketplace a level playing field for everyone concerned."***

The nonprofit trust, an outgrowth of the Wisconsin Counties Association, insures about 60 school districts.

The new state law has created more competition among health insurers, and with that has come lower prices.

[Manitowoc Herald Times Reporter](#). Preliminary 2012-13 TR school **budget calls for no tax increase**

TWO RIVERS — Members of the Two Rivers Board of Education got their first look at the proposed 2012-13 budget Monday evening, and it includes no property tax increase for the third year in a row, according to District Administrator Randy Fredrikson.

"We're very pleased with that," Bob Bergeon, school board president, said in a phone interview Tuesday. He called it "a very good budget" and said the administration worked hard on it. He pointed out it maintains adequate funding for maintenance to keep the district's facilities "in top-notch shape."

[Sheboygan Press](#). Sheboygan, county and school district move to reshape their futures

*"Budgetarily, it works for us the way it is," Ryan said of the Walker budget provisions. "We have police and fire, they still have collective bargaining rights because they are in a unique position. At this point I don't see turning the clock back to where it was. **The city is in a much better position now to run more efficiently than we were before.**"*

[Manitowoc Herald Times Reporter](#). (February 20, 2012) Rep. Ziegelbauer: What a difference a year makes for Wisconsin

*Making these tough decisions helped close the budget gap **without raising taxes and saved countless governmental jobs** all around us. At Manitowoc County we're in good shape. Now that we're able to manage our operations sensibly, we've saved jobs, while holding the line on taxes and generating a small budget surplus. **Instead of constantly cutting jobs, most cities, schools and counties will be creating stable career opportunities.***

[Appleton Post Crescent](#). (February 28, 2012) **Insurance changes to offset budget deficit for Kimberly schools**

*KIMBERLY — Officials say savings from health insurance changes for employees in the Kimberly Area School District **will offset a projected \$1.1 million budget deficit next year.***

The Board of Education unanimously approved changes Monday that include introduction of a high-deductible health insurance plan. Employees also will be given three other costlier insurance options.

The district could have achieved \$375,000 in savings through simply increasing employee insurance premiums by 12.6 percent, he said.

*In addition to greater district savings under a high-deductible plan, those employees who experience a worst-case scenario and reach the full deductible **would still pay less than they would have under a premium hike**, Kvasnica said.*

[Onalaska Holmen Courier-Life News](#). (March 2, 2012) Onalaska district looks to save on retirees

Changing post-employment benefits for Onalaska teachers could save the district big money while still providing a good deal for the teachers.

*Monday night, the Onalaska Board of Education penned a new plan for its teachers that would **continue good post-employment benefits while controlling costs for the district.** The action broke employees into three groups "grandfathering" 35 who are the oldest and have the most experience while proposing to transition the rest into a different way of doing retirement benefits.*

*Over the long haul — about 30 years — the changes are estimated to **save \$7.3 million, a 28 percent drop in expense for the school district.***

[Ozaukee Press](#) (March 21, 2012) [Health insurance changes to net big savings for school district](#)

PW-S officials consider changing carriers, plan to cut cost by as much as 21%

*The Port Washington-Saukville School District may be able to **save nearly \$1 million***

by switching health insurance carriers and making relatively minor changes in the plan it offers employees, a consultant told School Board members Monday.

Hays Companies, an insurance and employee benefits consulting firm hired by the district, presented preliminary bids from four insurance providers **showing that the competitive bidding process alone will save the district money.**

For instance, WEA Trust, the longtime provider of insurance for the district, initially told school officials to expect an **8% increase** in premiums this year. But when the company was informed the district was shopping for insurance, it revised its proposal to show a **3.3% decrease** in the premium, Sara Hames, vice president of employee benefits for Hays, said.

"This decrease was due to competition alone with no changes in the plan," she said.

United Health Care and Humana both submitted preliminary bids offering **7% decreases** in premiums without plan changes.

A 7% decrease in the district's total \$5.27 million annual health insurance premium would result in a **savings of \$368,993.**

The district can double, possibly even triple, that savings if it makes minor changes to its insurance plan, Hames said.

La Crosse Tribune . (March 28, 2012) <u>Insurance switch to save Onalaska district \$800k</u>
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A switch in health insurance providers will save more than \$800,000 for the Onalaska School District and its employees.

After considering bids from a number of providers, school officials dropped longtime carrier WEA Trust.

The school district will work with Gundersen Lutheran and Mayo-affiliated HMOs to offer a dual-choice program, the first of its kind in a school district.

Superintendent Fran Finco said the plans were a creative solution to the district's budget woes.

"We have a finite number of dollars," he said.

A consulting firm hired to help the district shop for new insurers said the HMOs made significant compromises to their typical proposals to make the deal.

School board members approved the change Monday at the board's regular meeting. Teachers and school staff will be able to choose between the two local providers. Because employees pay for 20 percent of their coverage, **the switch will save them between \$300 and \$700 a year**, depending on the size of their plan, Finco said.

That accounts for a large chunk of the total savings. The rest — about \$660,000 — goes to the district.

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#) (April 5, 2012) MPS to end teachers' second pension in 2013

*The decision was approved by the Milwaukee School Board last week and takes effect on July 1, 2013 -- the day after the teachers' current contract expires and educators begin operating **under new state legislation** that dramatically limits collective bargaining.*

*The move will reduce the district's long-term obligation to pay into the plan by an estimated **\$20 million**, according to MPS. It is also expected to reduce the district's yearly pension contributions by an estimated **\$5 million** starting in 2013-'14.*

***Since 1982**, the supplemental pension has been available to teachers in addition to their primary Wisconsin Retirement System pension. It was created to offset early retirement penalties in the WRS pension, but those penalties have now been reduced and in some cases no longer exist, according to the district.*

*"We want to compensate (teachers) for their hard work and we want to be able to attract the best and brightest new teachers as well, but **this is something that has outlived its original purpose and something we can no longer afford**," MPS Superintendent Gregory Thornton said in a statement.*

[La Crosse Tribune](#). (April 16, 2012) Madison Matters: WEA is forced to adapt

*District superintendent Joe Schroeder said school officials considered switching five years earlier but found back then that WEA Trust offered the best value. After re-evaluating this year, the district discovered it could now cut its \$8.5 million bill for health insurance by about **\$2 million by switching to United Healthcare**, he said.*

"For whatever reason there's a much more competitive environment now," Schroeder said. He added that WEA Trust had provided solid enough service that the district might consider going back if the trust's costs come down in the future.

[Westby Times](#) (April 5, 2012) School district insurance change to **save \$485,458**

*After reviewing numerous health insurance plan options and continual requests for a better rate from the top contenders, the bottom line had the Gundersen HMO (Alt #4) **saving the district \$485,458; a number the board felt would go a long way in reducing an estimated \$450,000 to \$500,000 budget deficit for the 2012-13 school year.***

Westby, like many school districts across the state, has been looking hard at the health insurance savings option as a way of addressing the deficit, ever since last year when Gov. Scott Walker signed Act 10, which requires state union employees to contribute 12.6 percent to their own healthcare benefit packages and limits collective bargaining rights. It is a move that has prompted a recall of Walker, along with a number of state legislators who supported the action.

After reviewing 14 health insurance options, the teacher's union and administration initially narrowed down the field of proposals to three for the school board to review during the March monthly board of education meeting.

[River Falls Journal](#) (April 18, 2012) River Falls School District: Health insurance savings eases pain of budget cuts

*A change of health insurance carriers with a higher deductible plan will save the school district **\$385,000** for the next school year.*

Monday night, April 16, the school board OK'd the switch from WEA (Wisconsin Education Association) to Health Partners.

School district Personnel Director Donna Hill said the three-year deal could affect more than 250 teachers and staff.

Yearly cost increases are capped at 9%. The plan can also be adjusted if those increases are deemed too high.

*Hill said the district is still bidding out for dental coverage. Depending on how those bids return, **more cost savings are possible for the district**.*

The new health insurance deal helped minimize classroom and teacher cuts for the 2012-13 year.

Balancing next year's budget required coming up with a \$900,000 budget reduction package.

The health-care savings were included in the reduction package that the school board passed Monday night.

Reductions totaling \$900,000 had been worked out over the winter. The new health-care deal meant some of those cuts were avoided.

[Brookfield Now](#). (April 18, 2012) Elmbrook School District projects 2% drop in spending

The Elmbrook School Board on Tuesday took its first official look at the proposed 2012-13 budget, which proposes a 2.07 percent decrease in spending, from \$81 million to \$79.3 million.

*Preliminary estimates predict the **tax rate dropping from the current \$10.03 to \$9.96 per \$1,000** of equalized valuation.*

*The spending plan **preserves current courses and staffing**, aims to maintain maximum class sizes ranging from 25 in the lowest grades to 30 in middle and high school and provides a 1.1 percent increase in salaries for current employees.*

A first-step view

Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations Keith Brightman walked board members through a general overview meant to be the first step in several discussions scheduled to conclude with initial board approval May 22.

*Two key expenditure decreases for next year include \$1.26 million from closing Hillside Elementary School, a decision the board made in late 2011, and **\$650,000 in redesigning the district health plan.***

"Without those two items, we would be having a very different discussion," Brightman said.

*Like other districts across the state, **Brightman credited Act 10**, the state's budget reform bill that ended collective bargaining, for Elmbrook's ability to manage labor costs. He also was quick to point out that while the district's original projection of a 0.045 percent salary increase was based on a significant decrease in state aid, the **district is recommending a higher increase for current staff.***

[Shorewood Patch](#) (April 17, 2012) Healthcare Provider Swap Saves Shorewood Schools \$537,000

School officials dump WEA Trust for another provider, but will stick with the state's largest teachers union for dental insurance.

*School officials dropped Wisconsin Education Association Trust as its employee health care provider Tuesday, **saving Shorewood schools an estimated \$537,000 in the 2012-13 school year.***

A one-year contract with Wisconsin Counties Association Group Health Trust goes into effect on July 1. WCA was chosen from among four other providers.

WCA Trust is a subsidiary of an association with the same name, that provides local governments coverage from reputable private sector companies, according to its website.

Business Manager Mark Boehlke said district employees will not see any changes in their plans other than the amount they pay per month. Annual premiums will fall by \$114 for single coverage and \$206 for family coverage.

"It's the same plan design, it's the same network," Boehlke said.

The district did stick with WEA Trust for dental coverage. The district's premium decreases 4.1 percent, or \$8,858, from this year. Employees will also see a reduction in their premiums under the new plan on July 1.

WEA is a nonprofit insurance organization created by the Wisconsin Education Association Council, the state's largest teachers union.

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